

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Propertyhistoric name Blackwell, James, House

other names/site number _____

2. Locationstreet & number State Road 1411

N/A not for publication

city, town Cornwall☒ vicinitystate North Carolina code NCcounty Granvillecode 077zip code 27565**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

- ☐ building(s)
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

11 2

Noncontributing

2 buildings sites structures objects2 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Historic and Architectural Resources of GranvilleCounty, North CarolinaNumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the NationalRegister. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the

National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic-single dwelling

Agriculture/Subsistence

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Federal

Georgian

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls weatherboard

roof metal

other stone

metal

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Section number 7 Page 1 DESCRIPTION

Two of the county's finer vernacular Federal mantels are the hallmark of the surprisingly handsome, Georgian and Federal style interior of the outwardly modest, one-story-and-loft, James Blackwell House. Unoccupied since 1948, the plantation era house is nonetheless in solid condition, maintained by its owners and last occupants, Calvin and Foy Hart, who are both distantly related to its original owner. A row of young cedars almost brushes the open shed affixed to its rear and an unpaved road runs by its western side. Its north-facing front elevation and its eastern side elevation look out over the fields and pastures that drop away steeply to its east. The house ["A" on attached sketch map] retains two non-contributing outbuildings to its rear - a post-1970 frame tobacco barn [B] and a mid-twentieth century log and stucco tobacco barn [C] that was moved to its site. Its fields and pastures, which are so important to its integrity, are a contributing site.

The traditional, hall-parlor plan structure is lit, at its front facade, by three asymmetrically arranged bays. The off-center door and the window to the west open onto the hall, the larger of the two rooms. The other window lights the second, smaller room, the parlor. A high stone foundation lifts the house off the ground. Stones also form the two gable end, double-shouldered chimneys, the eastern of which has a replacement brick stack. Extending a few feet to the east, the foundation provides a footing for a tiny shed room, which is sided with beaded weatherboards as is the rest of the house. This room is called the "whiskey room" by Blackwell's descendants, for Blackwell is said to have run a government distillery on his property and to have kept his licensed liquor close at hand. The house is constructed of heavy, mortised and tenoned timbers, a few of the wooden pegs of which are visible where some weatherboards have pulled away. A significant proportion of the exterior remains intact in spite of age and weathering, although an open equipment shed, built by the Harts in the early 1980s, now shades its rear. Its front porch, the sill marks of which remain, is no longer present.

The plantation era, Georgian and Federal style interior of Blackwell's initially small plantation seat is truly exceptional, for it has been little changed since it was neatly and laboriously cut, planed, chiseled and installed. Raised six-panel doors enframed by three-part surrounds and supported by H-L hinges serve the two downstairs rooms. In company with the

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majority of its smaller contemporaries in the county, the walls are not plastered, but rather are sheathed with wide, flush, beaded boards. These carefully fitted boards even line the wall of the boxed stair that leads from the hall to the open loft. A narrow, molded, projecting board at chair rail height effectively creates the illusion of flush-sheathed wainscoting beneath it, the type of wainscoting, usually more fully realized, found in the county throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.

The most striking decorative elements of the interior are the mantels. The simpler of the two, in the smaller room, has continuous reeded boards that enframe its hearth and the three recessed panels of its lintel. At the hall mantel these panels are replaced by a frieze of alternating, horizontally and vertically reeded boxes that meet at the center of the lintel at a square composed of four reeded triangles. Reeded boxes are also deftly gouged into the posts that bracket the segmentally-arched, hearth opening. An elaborately ogee-molded shelf completes the ensemble, rising above the reeding beneath it.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Agriculture

Period of Significance

1820s-early 1830s to 1865

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

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Section number 8 Page 1 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The James Blackwell House - one of the most finely finished and intact, hall-parlor plan dwellings in Granville County - is significant for both its traditional plan and its stylish motifs. As a modest but not insubstantial, one-story-and-loft dwelling, built on a traditional hall-parlor plan, it is representative of the type of house occupied by many of the county's small planters during the plantation era. (See associated Historic Context 1 - The Plantation Era in Granville County- 1746-1865) Though once numerous, the dwellings of these planters have survived in far smaller numbers than those of their wealthier contemporaries; and of the survivors, none have experienced fewer alterations, particularly inside, than Blackwell's house. The dwelling is also significant for its Georgian and Federal style interior finish. Sheathed in wood and composed of but two rooms and a loft, the interior is nonetheless quite finely finished, from its Georgian style three-part surrounds and raised, six-panel doors to its exceptional, reeded, vernacular Federal mantels. (See associated Property Type 1 - Georgian and Federal Style Dwellings) The tiny whiskey room extending out from its east hall room is quite unusual and is significant as a reminder of a forgotten enterprise of some local plantation era farmers, the production of licensed liquor. The meeting of traditional plan and stylish motifs suggests the nature of the middle ground occupied by the county's small planters, that space between the great wealth and mansions of the large slaveholders and the one-room and tiny hall-parlor plan houses of the yeomanry. The property's period of significance does not extend beyond 1865, the end of the plantation era, because there are no contributing buildings or structures within its boundaries that relate to its use in the post-Civil War years as a bright leaf tobacco farm.

The finish of Blackwell's dwelling suggests that it was built in the 1820s or early 1830s. It would have been a fitting residence for a man who owned four slaves at the taking of the 1830 federal census. Blackwell's wealth increased throughout the plantation era, although he apparently remained content with his modest home. The 1840 census lists him as owning 13 slaves, a figure that climbed by five in the next ten years. By the taking of the 1860 census he was a comparatively wealthy man. His real estate was valued at \$5,200 and his personal estate at \$22,000, much of which probably consisted of his 27 slaves. They were housed in five slave dwellings, all of which, along with the house's other early outbuildings, have been destroyed.

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Blackwell is said by descendants to have acquired the property upon which he raised his house from his parents, John and Frances (Pomfrett) Blackwell. [1] They had purchased a 312 acre tract of land in the area in 1795 which may be the one upon which he raised his house [Deed Book P, Page 157]. Blackwell purchased a tract of land in the area in 1832, the acreage of which is unclear [Deed Book 6, Page 318], and a second tract of 148.25 acres for \$400 in 1834 [Deed Book 8, Page 198]. It cannot be determined upon which of these inexactly described tracts of land he raised his house. The house remained in the family after his death, acquired with 93.5 acres in 1881 by his son-in-law and daughter, John and Bettie (Blackwell) Hart [Deed Book 47, Page 182]. The farm and house are now owned and maintained by Calvin and Foy Hart, who were the house's last occupants, living there for two years until building their brick home to the north of the house across the farm lane on the property in 1948. They are both distantly related to the Blackwells and the Harts.

[1] Interview with family descendants Mrs. J. R. Williams and Fred Blackwell, August, 1986.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Granville County Deeds. Granville County Courthouse, Oxford, N.C.

Interviews with Mrs. J. R. Williams and Fred Blackwell, August, 1986; Calvin Hart, March, 1987.

United States Manuscript Censuses. Microfilm located at Richard H. Thornton Public Library, Oxford, N.C.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

☐ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 12 acres

UTM References

A   
Zone Easting Northing

C   

B  Easting Northing

☒ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

☒ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By _____

name/title	Marvin A. Brown/Architectural Historian & Patricia Esperon/Historian
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organization Granville County-Oxford Historic Survey date 8/17/87

street & number P.O. Box 1556(State Historic Pres. Office) telephone 919-693-1491

city or town Oxford state N.C. zip code 27565

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UTM REFERENCES

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	17	706730	4037460
B	17	706720	4037420
C	17	706840	4037220
D	17	707030	4037200
E	17	707040	4037300
F	17	706900	4037460

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at point A: 17 706730 4037460 on the USGS polygon, where the south side of the farm lane intersects with the east side of State Road 1411, continuing south approximately 350 feet, along the east side of State Road 1411, to point B: 17 706720 4037420 on the polygon, where the tree line meets the east side of State Road 1411. Continuing in a straight line southeast approximately 650 feet, along the edge of the woods, to point C: 17 706840 4037220 on the polygon, where the tree line turns east. Continuing in a straight line east approximately 550 feet, along the edge of woods, to point D: 17 707030 4037200 on the polygon, where the tree line meets the west side of the branch of Grassy Creek. Continuing along the west side of the branch of Grassy Creek approximately 1050 feet to point F: 17 706900 4037460 on the polygon, where the west side of the branch of Grassy Creek meets the south side of the farm lane. Continuing west approximately 500 feet along the south side of the farm lane to the point of origin.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Approximately 12 acres that include the dwelling and the surrounding fields that have been historically associated with

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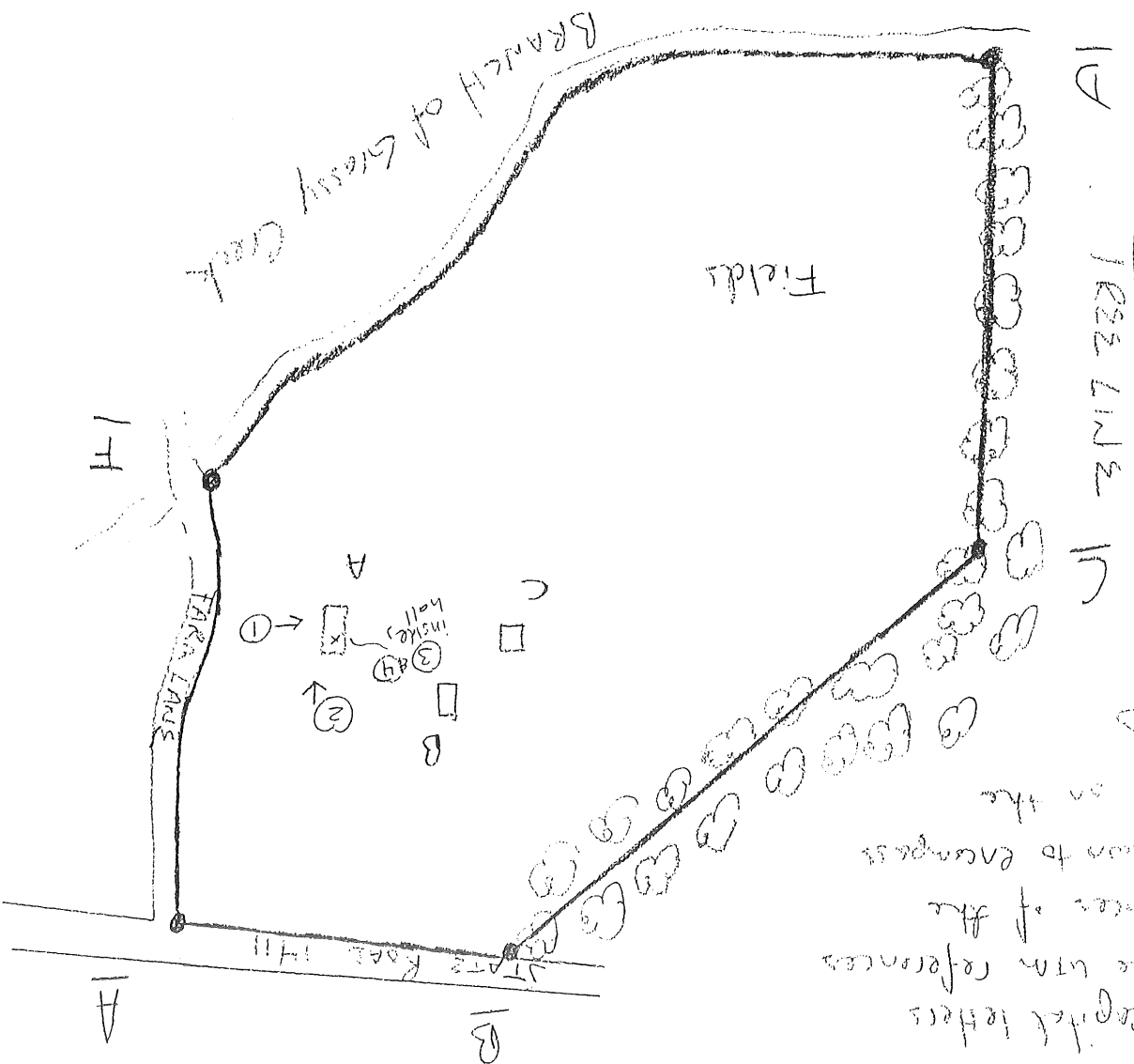
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the house, maintain historic integrity, and convey the property's historic setting are being nominated for the National Register. The remaining property has been excluded because of intruding structures or because it is now woodland and is no longer used for farm production. In both these cases the land use has substantially changed so that it no longer contributes to the historic integrity or historic significance of the property as a plantation era farm.

The western boundary from UTM points A to B includes the fields and dwelling to its east and excludes property outside of the owner's property line to its west. The southern boundary from UTM points B to C and C to D includes the fields to its north and excludes woodland to its east. The eastern boundary from UTM points D to F includes the fields to its west and excludes property that falls outside of the owner's property line to its east. The northern boundary from UTM points F to A includes the dwelling to its south and excludes a modern home, built within the last fifty years, to its north.

Underlined capital letters represent the vtn references for the vertices of the polygon drawn to encompass the property on the accompanying usgs map.



James Blackwell House
Granville County, North Carolina
Approx. Scale 1" = 200"
Approx. 12 Acres

Contributing Buildings
A - Blackwell House

Contributing Site
Cultivated fields and pastures

Non-Contributing Buildings
B - Post-1970 front tobacco barn
C - Mid-20th Century log and
sheds tobacco barn moved
to site

